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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2010

Media Highlights

US Embassy Ankara-Turkey Media Reaction, as prepared by the Public Affairs Information Office

How the US is Playing

US on 'Sledgehammer' Detentions: "We're Not Concerned" (Zaman)
Islamist-oriented Zaman says the US Administration has viewed as "normal" the "Sledgehammer" detention of retired and active duty commanders in Turkey. In a press briefing Monday, State Department Spokesman Philip Crowley said: "These issues in the evolution of politics and society in Turkey are not new. I don't think we have any specific concerns. Obviously, any action taken should be in accord with Turkish law and should be transparent." Crowley noted that last week in Qatar, Secretary Clinton had a "very detailed and successful" meeting with PM Erdogan, and that the US continued working closely with Turkey on the Middle East peace process, Cyprus, Iraq and Iran.

Op-Eds on Military Detentions

Opinions offered a plate with conflicting arguments. Mainstream Hurriyet's Oktay Eksi foresees very critical days ahead "because of the government's direct interfering and intimidating the judicial affairs." Ali Bayramoglu in pro-government/Islamist Yeni Safak however thinks all of the recent developments are "part of the Ergenekon process which is about demilitarization." Tamer Korkmaz in the same newspaper names one of the detained generals, Ergin Saygun, as "proven guilty" because "he attended the Hudson Institute conference in 2006 and he was the mastermind behind the military's electronic warning message on April 27." Liberal Radikal's Murat Yetkin notes the "political consequences" of this ongoing process and he believes the ruling AKP is very well aware of it: "Due to the political impact of the judicial process, the top AKP members have started to make statements about the need for early elections."

Support From US to Ankara (Sabah)

Mainstream Sabah reports that A/S Philip Gordon said US support for Turkey's EU membership continues. According to the paper, Gordon said "re-opening of the Halki Seminary, pursuing of democratic opening and advancing on Cyprus issue, will carry forward Turkey's

hope for the EU."

Op-Eds on AGR

Along with Iran and Cyprus issues, Armenian genocide resolution efforts in the US Congress will be the main problems to tackle in what mainstream Milliyet columnist Sami Kohen calls the "critical days ahead." The US connection to the Turkey-Armenia protocols comes with the pending HR says the writer and he thinks it "will most likely pass from the Commission as well as pass from the floor." And "this is going to be a major crisis in not only US-Turkey bilateral ties but also between Turkey and Armenia" he concludes.

"Can Obama endure the consequences of a genocide resolution?" asks Ilhan Tanir in the English daily Hurriyet Daily News: "As one Washington source stated, he still expects Turkey to pull a rabbit out of a hat when approaching March 4."

US Doesn't Trust Iranian Proposals (Aksam)

Mainstream Aksam reports Glynn Davies, the US envoy at the IAEA, told a roundtable meeting in Ankara that Iran has not responded to the IAEA proposal for taking 1,200 kg of uranium out of the country and import from France "processed uranium" for the needs of 850,000 cancer patients in Iran. "It has been a disappointment for us all," said Davies. "We believe in Turkey's sincerity. However, neither Iran's simultaneous swap offer, nor the different things they told Turkey changed our negative evaluation of Iran. The time has come; now we must be at the stage of active pressure," he emphasized. Since October, Iran has produced 600 kg of more uranium, noted Davies, and then stressed that if it is not taken out of Iran, it

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might be used in producing nuclear bombs.

A New Poor Class in the US (Cumhuriyet)

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says the number of the unemployed in the US has soared to 15 million. Those with better education will fill the new jobs to be created in the US, and those with weaker education will create a new "poor class." Cumhuriyet also says at least six million people could turn homeless in the US.

In the Headlines

Turkey's Police Round Up Generals in New Military Crisis; US Angle (Vatan)

All media outlets report extensively and sensationally on Monday's police roundup of 49 retired and active duty military personnel, including 13 retired generals, in operations in Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa and Bodrum. Tabloid Posta headline screams "Sledgehammer Against the Generals," while Al Jazeera TV reports that "Turkey is arresting all generals involved in a coup attempt." US Angle? Mainstream Milliyet headlines "From Whitehouse Summit to Detention," and along with CNNTurk, reports that the former deputy chief of the TGS General Ergin Saygun had accompanied PM Erdogan in 2007 White House meetings to orchestrate US-Turkey intelligence sharing for the elimination of the PKK. Prime Minister Erdogan, who is in Madrid, said only that the crackdown was carried out on the orders of prosecutors, and declined comment because the issue was being handled by the judiciary. TGS Chief General Ilker Basbug cancelled a planned visit to Egypt because of the developments. Mainstream, pro-government Sabah says the 2/22 round-up was "unprecedented" in the history of the Turkish republic. The charges are for allegedly plotting to overthrow the ruling Islamic-rooted AKP government, tagged by the media as the "Sledgehammer" (Balyoz) investigation, which was first reported on in leftist Taraf newspaper.

Afghanistan

In "Civilian Massacre # 2," mainstream Milliyet highlights "hitting a convoy of civilians, NATO strike in Afghanistan kills 33, including women and children. Last week's NATO strike that mistakenly killed 12 civilians and this one put a heavy blow on NATO's efforts to gain the hearts of Afghan people." Mainstream Hurriyet calls it "They Hit Civilians Again," while Islamist-oriented Zaman says "NATO Massacres Civilians Again," and opines "NATO gets strong reaction for causing civilian deaths in

fight against the Taliban." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says "NATO's Uruzgan Massacre," noting "27 civilians are killed 'mistakenly' in a NATO strike in Afghanistan's Uruzgan province." In "They Killed, And Then Apologized," mainstream Aksam highlights "civilians were targets again in the Operation Mushtarak in Afghanistan." Cumhuriyet, Hurriyet and others report "ISAF Commander General McChrystal has apologized to President Karzai over the Afghan civilian deaths." In a related story, mainstream Haberturk in "NATO Sweats As Allies Leave," notes the concerns over "a domino effect following the collapse of the Dutch government over the withdrawal of Dutch troops in Afghanistan." Haberturk warns that "ISAF commandership is in great danger. Canada, Australia and others could take Dutch as an example."

TV Spotlight (CNN Turk)

Prime Minister Erdogan encouraged the Minsk Group to work with Armenia and Azerbaijan for seeing a "just" solution in Nagorno Karabakh. "Once the Nagorno Karabakh issue is resolved, the problem between Turkey and Armenia would have been resolved," said Erdogan.

On Tuesday, President Abdullah Gul will receive Court of Appeals (Yargitay) President Hasan Gerceker and Council of State (Danistay) President Mustafa Birden.

The ruling AKP has kicked off preparations for constitutional

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reforms which includes changes in the judicial system.

The AKP head of the parliamentary committee for constitutional affairs, Burhan Kuzu, said early elections would be called if a new case was launched for closing the Party.

Iranian Deputy Speaker Muhammad Reza Bahonar said Iran was exerting efforts on the international arena to ensure the return of Nagorno Karabakh to Azerbaijan.

Israeli PM Netanyahu has renewed calls for the international community to impose an oil embargo on Iran.

Iran's police chief General Ismail Ahmadi Moghaddam said the BBC and VOA were acting as "spy agencies" inside his country.

JEFFREY